

Hiraethog Rural District Council

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1946

To the Chairman and Members of the Hiraethog Rural District Council:

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year 1946—such statistics and information as are available for the whole District are included, but the report deals mainly with the upper area.

General Statistics :

Area of District	...	...	...	93,079 acres
Population (Last census)	...	...	...	5,874
Estimated population (1946)	...	...	...	5,181
Inhabited houses (1946)	...	...	...	1,747
Rateable Value of District	...	...	...	£29,213
Product of Penny Rate	...	...	...	£120

Vital Statistics (Whole District) :

	M	F	Total
Live Births	47	42	89
Legitimate	44	39	83
Illegitimate	3	3	6
Still Births	—	—	NIL
Deaths (all ages)	33	24	57
Infants under 1 year of age	2	3	5
Legitimate	2	3	5

These figures represent the following rates as compared with those of the District in the previous year and the present year's General Rates :—

1946 District Live Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...	17.2
1945 District Live Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...	14.7
1946 General Live Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...	19.1
1946 General Still Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...	NIL
1945 District Still Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...	0.19
1946 General Still Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...	0.53
1946 District Death Rate (Crude) per 1,000 population	...	11.0
1945 District Death Rate (Crude) per 1,000 population	...	16.0
1946 General Death Rate (Crude) per 1,000 population	...	11.5
1946 District Infantile Mortality per 1,000 Live Births	...	56
1945 District Infantile Mortality per 1,000 Live Births	...	52
1946 General Infantile Mortality per 1,000 Live Births	...	43
1946 District Infantile Mortality per 1,000 Legitimate Births	...	59
1946 General Infantile Mortality per 1,000 Illegitimate Births	...	NIL

The causes of death in children under one year of age (Infantile Mortality) were congenital (2) prematurity (1) pneumonia (1) whooping cough (1)—there was no death in children under 2 years from enteritis. Deaths from infectious diseases were due to whooping cough (1) tuberculosis (1) influenza (2) pneumonia (2)—there was no death due to puerperal causes. Of the total of 57 deaths, about a third occurred in people over 70 years of age (7 over 80 years)—22 were due to cardiovascular diseases and 12 to cancer.

Social Conditions :

The year saw the welcome return home of the majority of the women and men who had served in the Forces during the war—as some of them had married whilst on service, their return further accentuated the housing problem in the villages. Agriculture remains the primary industry of the area and with the removal of occupational restrictions there has been a tendency for skilled farm labourers to leave the farms for unskilled employment on public works and fewer boys appear to take up agricultural employment on leaving school. The area has lost families of young parents who have been attracted to other areas by the better farming prospects offered there and the better living amenities and education facilities. A part of the area has by now been extensively developed for forestry and the changes consequent on this, have not only changed the character of the land and its utilisation but also the type of inhabitants. Mechanisation of farm work has increased rapidly and the production and sale of milk to the factories situated on the borders of the District is an important part of the industry—these factors amongst others have caused the disappearance or changing of the rural ancillary crafts and industries of the traditional style of farming. There is no unemployment and the area can be stated to be relatively prosperous. The demand for agricultural workers is met by German prisoners of war about 70 of whom are housed at a hostel at Cerrig-y-Druidion and many are billeted on the farms—some of the men at the hostel are engaged on drainage work. The health of these men has been good and they are industrious and well disciplined.

Considering the abnormal wet summer weather, the state of health of the area has been satisfactory and there was no epidemic of any note.

Small quantities of food gifts received from the Dominions were distributed amongst those deemed to be in need of them.

The attraction of the area as a holiday resort during the war years appear to continue and substantial numbers of people spend their holidays here every year.

Removal of travelling and other restrictions led to a widening of the scope of the existing considerable social and cultural activities of the area and tribute should be paid to the time and effort voluntarily given by people, who are interested in the welfare of this rural area. These activities cater for every age and interest as far as possible—on the whole the response is encouraging though one would like to see the youth clubs more firmly established in some of the villages. Lack of success in some of these places is due to absence of competent leaders locally and in others to lack of appreciation of the urgent needs of the locality by the authority administering grants.

I stress the necessity for the continuance of every effort locally and centrally to increase and widen such activities as one of the means to improve the standard of life—such efforts combined with the resolve to provide or insist on other amenities would help to combat influences which tend to depopulate rural areas of people and families.

I have to again report that the position regarding venereal disease is satisfactory and in addition this year. I can state that there is an improvement in the figures relating to illegitimate births as compared with previous years but the position remains such that continued effort is still necessary to combat this social cancer.

Health Services :

Efforts were made during the year without success to bring the District under the control of a single M.O.H.—the lower part of the District remains under the Caernarvon Joint Sanitary Committee for certain purposes with the result that the District has reverted to dual M.O.H. control.

The details of the local services under the National Health Service Act 1946 have not been disclosed so that no action was necessary during the year.

The year was notable for the establishment of a voluntary ambulance service to cover the whole District—the success of the scheme is primarily due to the enthusiastic volunteers of Llanrwst, Llangernyw and Cerrigydrudion St. John Ambulance Divisions.

Hospital, Laboratory and Clinic Services remain unchanged and apart from transport difficulties are as satisfactory as can be expected under present circumstances. The District is served very efficiently by two County Health Visitors and I think that the work could be done as efficiently and certainly more economically in time and finance if the local District Nurses were entrusted with the work as is done in other areas. An increasing number of women now enter hospital for their confinements—some are advised

to go there for medical reasons but the majority on account of the home conditions and/or absence of help at home—the County Scheme of “Home Helps” does not appear to be of any assistance in this area. In the past, many young girls from this area have taken up nursing as a career and have done very well—it is to be hoped that this profession will continue to attract girls from these rural areas and so help to relieve the shortage of Nurses which has led to shortage of hospital accommodation.

As the result of gifts from the Red Cross—St. John County Committee, it was possible to establish medical comforts depots in the District—this provision has filled a much needed necessity in the home nursing of illness and the scheme could with advantage be extended to each village.

Mr. G. R. Hughes acts as Sanitary Inspector full time, also acting as Engineer and Surveyor. One Assistant to the Surveyor full time. Three workmen employed on maintenance and other works. One Clerk of Works engaged on supervising housing work under the direction of Mr. Hughes.

Sanitary Circumstances of the District :

As the following remarks are based on the annual report of the Sanitary Inspector, this part of my report relates to the whole District.

Water Supplies :

A detailed report on this matter was submitted last year—there has been a change during the year in regard to the schemes previously mentioned, as the Council have initiated consultation with the Nant Conway R.D.C. with a view to development of a joint water supply from Llyn Conwy and agreement has been reached regarding preliminary investigations. This scheme would provide an ample supply to this and other Districts at a sufficient pressure to cater for the major industry of the Districts in addition to domestic needs.

Progress was made with the scheme for Eglwysbach and following a public enquiry in August, it was hoped to have matters far enough advanced to advertise for tenders at the end of the year—the cost is given as £11,217. The provision of a supply for Pandy Tudur is also under consideration.

Owing to the exceptionally wet year, no actual shortage was experienced in the District—the fact is that this is more the exception than the rule. Any extra temporary demand shows that the margin of safety is too small, the quality of many existing supplies is unsatisfactory chemically and bacteriologically, the demand is steadily increasing, and there is no adequate supply for the major industry of the District—these are some of the factors which show the necessity for urgent provision of a comprehensive scheme.

Certain maintenance work was carried out on existing supplies at Llangwm, Nebo, Gwytherin, Ysbytty and Cerrig—also new connections were effected. Samples of water taken during the year were satisfactory on bacteriological examination.

It has been found necessary to renew the branch main to Cefnbrith and the position regarding supplies for essential work is illustrated by the fact that supply of pipes could not be promised under 30 weeks—it was possible to advertise for tenders for this work at the end of the year.

Sewerage and Drainage :

There has been no major change during the year and any future provision and development in the villages and farms are dependant on water supplies. Cases of isolated premises without adequate drainage system, are dealt with as met—4 new drainage systems were put in during the year as the consequence of informal action with the respective owners.

Progress was made with the preparation for sewers and disposal works at Eglwysbach, Llangernyw and Pentrefoelas—consideration will also have to be given to similar provisions in other villages and hamlets, especially those included in the Council's Housing Programme.

Housing :

The vast amount of complicated work needed under the present regime before any houses can be erected, was continued during the year with the result that the Council acquired 10 sites and were negotiating for another 5 of the selected sites—also layouts for 8 sites had been approved providing for the erection of 50 out of the 70 houses planned.

Licences were also issued for the erection of 3 houses for private individuals in accordance with the ratio specified by the Minister.

During the year the contract for the erection of 4 houses each at Cerrigydrudion, Pentrefoelas and Llangernyw was let to Messrs. William Jones & Son, Llanrwst and work was commenced on the Cerrig site in August. Progress has been disappointingly slow owing to labour difficulties and shortage of materials and the prospects of completion of the whole programme are remote unless there is some radical improvement as regards labour and materials—one such help suggested by the Council would be the lessening of the number of licences issued by the Ministry of Works for a great amount of work which could be deferred and the allocation of the labour and material to the immediate housing needs of the District.

Even the present programme of 70 houses will not solve the housing problem in the District, where the position is unsatisfactory and can only be remedied by further provision of new houses and radical improvement to a great number of existing dwellings. In connection with the latter, it is to be regretted that the Housing (Rural Workers) Act could not have been extended as some improvement of a substantial character could have been effected in individual houses and small holdings concurrently with the housing programme.

Extensive repairs were carried out during the year to houses owned by the Council and it is expected that all property will have been put in good repair by next year in spite of difficulties of supply.

Refuse Collection :

House refuse collection was carried out once a fortnight throughout the District—the acquisition of a lorry and the appointment of an extra permanent workman for the upper area have facilitated this and other work. With the advent of water supplies, it will be possible to stop the unsatisfactory and obsolete night soil collection which still has to be carried out in three villages. Various refuse tips in the District were given attention as necessary.

Disinfection, etc.

Two houses were disinfected after infectious diseases and there was one case of disinfestation at a farmhouse.

The few instances of complaints regarding pollution of streams were dealt with and remedied.

Schools :

Of the 16 schools in the District, 7 have no piped water supply and 9 no water carriage system of drainage—it was necessary to serve notice on the Managers of one school to remedy a sewerage disposal and drainage system. So far as known, no further action apart from that mentioned in my last report, has been taken to provide the much needed new schools in the District. All the schools in the upper area are at last supplying mid-day meals to the children.

Food :

Milk: Cowsheds and dairies were periodically visited. Visits were made to the premises of the 22 applicants for registration under the Milk & Dairies Act, advice given regarding necessary alterations and a check up was made before registration was allowed—little difficulty was experienced in getting improvements effected. There were 75 producers of T.T. Milk in the District out of a total of 177 for Denbighshire.

Meat: Supplies still come into the District from central abattoirs and complaints are still made about its quality due to the lapse of time between slaughtering and delivery.

Bread: Bakehouses were periodically visited and found satisfactory.

Inspections (by Sanitary Inspector):

Total number of visits	...	...	...	750
Number of informal notices	...	...	...	5
Number of statutory notices	...	...	...	2
Informal notices complied with	...	...	...	5
Statutory notices complied with	...	...	...	1

No prosecutions necessary.

Infectious Diseases (Upper Area):

During the first quarter of the year, there was an epidemic of whooping cough in two adjacent schools—the infection was a mild type and remained localised. The single case of measles was contracted outside the area, and the child was seen early enough to prevent the spread of the disease. Apart from the usual seasonal infections, the area has been free from any epidemics.

The position for the whole District in regard to diphtheria prophylaxis continues to be satisfactory—99.1% of the children aged 5—15 years of age resident in the District had been treated at June 30th and 99.2% at December 31st. The corresponding figures for the age group 1—5 years were 94.4% and 95.9% which show a commendable improvement on previous years—in the upper area, the Child Welfare Clinic at Cerrig is a valuable asset with this work. In addition to the above, over 200 school children received reinforcing doses during the year, making a total of over 400 children so treated since the Council sanctioned this measure. The time and effort expended over maintenance of records and planning of the work for the whole District is compensated by the results obtained and the willing co-operation and help given by Dr. McKendrick, Head Teachers and Clinic Staff whilst the small number of refusals is a tribute to the intelligence of the parents of the children.

I am still hopeful that some day the School Medical Authority will recognize the advantage of incorporating the Shick Test as part of their services and looking forward to the day when medical science can offer an efficient protective treatment against whooping cough.

Notifiable Diseases (Upper Area) :

The following notifications were received :—Whooping Cough 11 ; Pneumonia 2 ; Puerperal Pyrexia 2 ; Measles 1.

Deaths : Nil. Admission to Hospital : Nil.

Age Groups	Whooping Cough		Pneumonia		Measles		Puerperal Pyrexia
	M	F	M	F	M	F	F
0							
1		1					
3							
5	4	4					
10	1	1				1	
15							
25			2				2

Tuberculosis :

One pulmonary tuberculosis in a female aged 25 years was notified and one female aged 14 months died from the same cause—this latter case had not been notified and was a transferable death.

In conclusion, I have to thank the Clerk and his Staff for their assistance and acknowledge the efficient services of Mr. Hughes who in addition to exacting routine work of inspection and supervision of an extensive District, has had to shoulder responsibility for the ever increasing work in connection with new schemes.

I beg to remain,

Yours obedient Servant,

IFOR H. DAVIES, M.B., CH.B., S.B.ST.J.

September, 1947.